

Listing of the claims:

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for thermally conditioning objects

comprising:

a housing;

at least two thermally conditioning facilities arranged one above the other in the housing and substantially over the same floor area, each thermally conditioning facility comprising a tunnel shaped cavity in which objects present within the cavity can be impinged by a stream of thermally conditioned air, the cavity being arranged in parallel with a corresponding tunnel shaped cavity of each of the other thermally conditioning facilities, such that a stream of thermally conditioned air passing through the cavity of one of the at least two thermally conditioning facilities is prevented from also passing through the cavity of any one of the remaining thermally conditioning facilities, wherein an air path on which the thermally conditioned air flows to a first thermally conditioning facility leads through a second thermally conditioning facility, and a conveying system, by which the objects can be moved through the tunnel shaped cavity; and

~~The apparatus according to claim 2 further comprising~~ a device disposed in the air path by which the passage of thermally conditioned air from the second thermally conditioning facility into the first thermally conditioning facility can be selectively interrupted.

4. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the device for interrupting the air path is a controllable flap.
5. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the device for interrupting the air path is a closable louvre.

6. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim ~~[[1]]~~ 3, wherein the at least two thermally conditioning facilities at least regionally divide the air path on which the air is discharged from the tunnel shaped cavities.

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for thermally conditioning objects comprising:

a housing;

at least two thermally conditioning facilities arranged one above the other in the housing and substantially over the same floor area, each thermally conditioning facility comprising a tunnel shaped cavity in which objects present within the cavity can be impinged by a stream of thermally conditioned air, the cavity being arranged in parallel with a corresponding tunnel shaped cavity of each of the other thermally conditioning facilities, such that a stream of thermally conditioned air passing through the cavity of any one of the at least two thermally conditioning facilities is prevented from also passing through the cavity of any one of the remaining thermally conditioning facilities, and a conveying system, by which the objects can be moved through the tunnel shaped cavity; and

~~The apparatus according to claim 1,~~ wherein the air path on which the thermally conditioned air flows to the first thermally conditioning facility is independent of the air path on which the thermally conditioned air flows to the second thermally conditioning facility.

8. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the apparatus is designed as a drier and has at least one heating unit for thermally conditioning the air.

9. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the same number of heating units are provided as there are thermally conditioning facilities.

10. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for thermally conditioning objects

comprising:

a housing;

at least two thermally conditioning facilities arranged one above the other in the housing and substantially over the same floor area, each thermally conditioning facility comprising a tunnel shaped cavity in which objects present within the cavity can be impinged by a stream of thermally conditioned air, the cavity being arranged in parallel with a corresponding tunnel shaped cavity of each of the other thermally conditioning facilities, such that a stream of thermally conditioned air passing through the cavity of any one of the at least two thermally conditioning facilities is prevented from also passing through the cavity of any one of the remaining thermally conditioning facilities, and a conveying system, by which the objects can be moved through the tunnel shaped cavity; and

~~The apparatus according to claim 1,~~ wherein the at least two thermally conditioning facilities are designed as coolers.

11. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 10, further comprising at least one fan, which sucks in fresh air and introduces it as thermally conditioned air into the tunnel shaped cavities of the at least two thermally conditioning facilities.

12. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 10, further comprising at least one cooling unit, which cools the air introduced into the tunnel shaped cavities of the at least two thermally conditioning facilities.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) The thermal conditioning apparatus according to claim [[13]] 16, wherein the first thermal conditioning chamber is positioned above the second thermal conditioning chamber.

15. (Currently Amended) The thermal conditioning apparatus according to

Date April 6, 2007

Reply to Advisory Action dated February 26, 2007

claim [[13]] 16, wherein the second stream of air supplied by the second air inlet plenum to the second thermal conditioning chamber consists entirely of air delivered to the second air inlet plenum from the first air inlet plenum.

16. (Previously Presented) A thermal conditioning apparatus for circulating air about a workpiece present within the apparatus, the thermal conditioning apparatus comprising:

a first thermal conditioning chamber having a hollow cavity for receiving a first workpiece;

a second thermal conditioning chamber having a hollow cavity for receiving a second workpiece;

a first air inlet plenum for supplying a first stream of air to the first thermal conditioning chamber;

a second air inlet plenum for supplying a second stream of air to the second thermal conditioning chamber, the first air inlet plenum fluidly connected to the second inlet air plenum for allowing air from the first air inlet plenum to pass to the second air inlet plenum, wherein the first and second streams of air do not pass through a common thermal conditioning chamber; and

~~The thermal conditioning apparatus according to claim 13 further comprising a~~  
valve positioned between the first and second air inlet plenums for regulating an amount of air flowing from the first air inlet plenum to the second air inlet plenum.

17. (Currently Amended) The thermal conditioning apparatus according to claim [[13]] 16 further comprising an air discharge plenum for receiving the first stream of air discharged from the first thermal conditioning chamber and the second stream of air discharged from the second thermal conditioning chamber, wherein the first stream of air mixes with the second stream of air within the air discharge plenum.

18. (Currently Amended) A thermal conditioning apparatus for circulating air about a workpiece present within the apparatus, the thermal conditioning apparatus

comprising:

a first thermal conditioning chamber having a hollow cavity for receiving a first workpiece;

a second thermal conditioning chamber having a hollow cavity for receiving a second workpiece;

a first air inlet plenum for supplying a first stream of air to the first thermal conditioning chamber;

a second air inlet plenum for supplying a second stream of air to the second thermal conditioning chamber, the first air inlet plenum fluidly connected to the second inlet air plenum for allowing air from the first air inlet plenum to pass to the second air inlet plenum, wherein the first and second streams of air do not pass through a common thermal conditioning chamber; and

~~The thermal conditioning apparatus according to claim 13 further comprising~~  
an air conditioning unit operable for selectively heating and cooling a stream of air, the air conditioning unit fluidly connected to the first air inlet plenum.

19. (Previously Presented) The thermal conditioning apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the air discharge plenum is fluidly connected to the air conditioning unit.

20. (Currently Amended) A thermal conditioning apparatus for circulating air about a workpiece present within the apparatus, the thermal conditioning apparatus comprising:

a first thermal conditioning chamber having a hollow cavity for receiving a first workpiece;

a second thermal conditioning chamber having a hollow cavity for receiving a second workpiece;

a first air inlet plenum for supplying a first stream of air to the first thermal conditioning chamber;

a second air inlet plenum for supplying a second stream of air to the second thermal conditioning chamber, the first air inlet plenum fluidly connected to the second inlet

Date April 6, 2007

Reply to Advisory Action dated February 26, 2007

air plenum for allowing air from the first air inlet plenum to pass to the second air inlet plenum, wherein the first and second streams of air do not pass through a common thermal conditioning chamber;

~~The thermal conditioning apparatus according to claim 13 further comprising:~~

at least two air conditioning units, each fluidly connected to the first air inlet plenum and operable for selectively heating and cooling a stream of air delivered to the first inlet air plenum; and

at least one valve for regulating the amount of air passing between at least one of the air conditioning units and the first air inlet plenum.